Frequently Asked Questions (Revised 11/05/2021)

Eligibility Questions

Please clarify entities that are eligible to apply for funding.

Broadband providers are eligible to apply for funding. A broadband provider means one of the following:

- A video service provider as defined in section 1332.21 of the Revised Code;
- A provider that can provide tier one or tier two broadband service and is one of the following:
    - A telecommunications service provider;
    - A satellite broadcasting service provider;
    - A wireless service provider as defined in section 4927.01 of the Revised Code.

Are municipalities or municipal electric systems eligible to apply?

No, municipalities or municipal electric systems are not eligible to apply. "Broadband provider" does not include a governmental or quasi-governmental entity.

What does "eligible project" mean?

"Eligible project" means a project to provide tier two broadband service access to residences in an unserved area or tier one area of a municipal corporation or township that is eligible for funding under sections 122.4013 to 122.4046 of the Revised Code.

What can be used as evidence in finding eligible service areas?

- The most recent FCC maps and data
- RDOF eligibility data
- NTIA- Indicators of Broadband Need Map
- Speed test data
- Other relevant data

Are areas currently served by satellite and/or wireless service considered as eligible in the program if those entities state they provide service above 25M/3M?

Areas that are served by satellite are eligible. If an area is served by fixed wireless and is at 25/3 or above, the area is not eligible

Are applications being accepted for both ILEC service area and outside the service area? Or only ILEC serving areas?

ILECs are allowed to serve any areas and are not restricted to their own service areas.

Are areas that are unserved or tier 1 that have been awarded federal funds (RDOF, etc.) eligible for project funding?

Areas that have been awarded RDOF funds are eligible if they do not have 25/3 service by the date of your application. Please note: the RDOF winner may challenge that area if they can show that they were awarded the RDOF funding for that area and can provide the service within two years.

A county interested in expanding broadband can't apply. Do they need to find a provider to apply?

A county will need to work with a provider to apply for this grant funding.

With regards to the eligible areas, are areas determined based on the 477 maps? Or another map? Or can the ISP self-determine eligible areas based on their knowledge of the area?

ISP applicants will need to provide evidence that the areas they are looking to serve are unserved or underserved. This can be done by submitting evidence from maps and data mentioned throughout this document.

Is there a standard time frame to be used when determining the funding gap? For example, anticipated return in 12 months? 24 months? 3 years?

There is not a set time frame to be used when determining the funding gap.   The internet service provider may determine the time frame.

Do existing local government, cooperative and non-profit broadband network providers qualify for these grant funds?

Non-profits and electric cooperatives may qualify so long as they are otherwise determined to be telecommunications providers. As long as they are telecommunications providers, they are allowed to apply for funding. Local governments are not eligible to apply for the grant.

How would RDOF maps be used to determine eligible service areas? Would only those RDOF areas that were not bid on by providers be considered eligible areas?

If an area was eligible for RDOF funding, it has already been determined to be without adequate 25/3 coverage.   Any RDOF area may be eligible for funding, with the note that an application for addresses in an RDOF territory may be challenged by the successful RDOF bidder in that area.

If an area has broadband service available via mobile wireless at speeds better than 25/3, is this area eligible for funding?

If the fixed wireless services are being offered at speeds of 25/3 or above, those areas are not eligible. If the mobile wireless provider is only providing cell service or hotspots, then those areas are eligible.

Will service providers that won RDOF and were not able to serve the areas won be able to apply for this money?

If service providers won RDOF and were not able to serve the areas, they are eligible to apply for grant funding.

Please clarify whether providers in areas that have received funding in the past (RDOF for example) can apply for Ohio funds or are only able to challenge an application for Ohio funds by another provider.

Providers can do both. If the applicant has received RDOF funds for a specific area they can challenge the other applicant. Providers that have received federal funding are also allowed to apply for state funds as well.

What does unserved area mean?

An area without access to tier one broadband service or tier two broadband service. "Unserved area" excludes an area where construction of a network to provide tier one broadband service or tier two broadband service is in progress and is scheduled to be completed within a two-year period.

- Tier One Broadband Service Area: Means a retail wireline or wireless broadband service capable of delivering internet access at speeds of at least 10 but less than 25 megabits per second downstream and at least 1 but less than 3 megabits per second upstream.
- Tier Two Broadband Service Area: Means a retail wireline or wireless broadband service capable of delivering internet access at speeds of at least 25 megabits per second downstream and at least 3 megabits per second upstream.

Application asks for sufficient evidence that speed in service area is less than 25/3 - what is meant by "service area"?

The residential address in which providers are applying to bring 25/3 or above service to.

Can County commissioners request that the Department of Development find applications on their behalf for eligible projects in their county?

Yes. There is a form and template resolution on the website that county commissioners can use to request the Department of Development to solicit applications from broadband providers for program grants for eligible projects in the municipal corporations and townships of the county. It can be found here: https://broadband.ohio.gov/static/broadband-county-request-for-providers-09092021.pdf or under Related Files on the Ohio Residential Broadband Expansion Grant Program grant opportunities page.

Some areas may provide 10 Mbps at one cost but provide 25 Mbps at a much higher cost. How is "affordability" handled within the grant?

The applicants may only apply for grant funds to provide 25/3 service. Lower speeds will not be considered for the grant. Any information pertaining to the grant must specify what the customer service terms will be at that speed and not at a lower speed.

Are senior living centers, assisted living centers, dormitories, domestic violence shelters, and other types of long-term residential settings be included on the Grant Application?

Senior living centers and assisted living centers, dorms and shelters can be included in the project applications.

Are business MDUs, such as strip malls eligible?

No. Business MDUs, such as strip malls, are not eligible.

Can multiple users gain access to an existing application?

No, only the user who created the application can view/edit the application. This is due to security issues. Please consider the following suggestion when creating an application: make sure the email and password being used is one that can be shared among team members so that multiple people can access and work on the application if necessary. A generic email can also be created to be shared with team members.

Should all units in multi dwelling units be counted as a household?

Yes. For example, if there are 50 apartments in a complex that is underserved or unserved, 50 households can be included in the household count. The purpose of the grant is to pass as many addresses as possible with broadband connectivity. We encourage providers and applicants to include as much information as it can to any residential addresses that are known and will be passed.

Should mixed use addresses where a business and residence occupy the same building be counted as a residential household?

The residences can be counted but not the business.

Understanding that access to the MDU premise requires landlord, tenant, and government ROW access maybe difficult, is there a requirement to gain that access to count the households?

No. All units would be considered as a home passed regardless of the difficult or cost of gaining access to the customer's premise.

 Should all lots/spaces in a trailer park by considered as a residential household passed even though the street address for all lots/space is identical?

Yes. If there are 50 lots/spaces in a trailer park; 50 households are passed and include in the households counts for the Grant Application.

Is there a template for attachment 14- Refund of Non-Compliance? It says in the guidebook that there is one.

Yes, the guidebook has been updated to include a template for attachment 14.

Under the definition for last mile under HB 2, for the purposes of the Residential Broadband Expansion Grant Program, what is meant by the text "(2) It is not required to be, or limited to, a specific distance measurement of one mile or any other specific distance."

Last mile is just a term; it is not a distance measurement.

Funding Questions

What is the per application/provider dollar amount available for this round of funding?
There is no limit on the amount of funding that a provider/project can ask for.

What is the dollar amount available overall for funding?
Currently, there is up to $270 million in funding for the grants.

What is the term length considered in calculating the funding gap?
There is no set term length to be considered in calculating the funding gap. Please follow your internal business practice.

What can be classified as in-kind contributions?
Some examples of in-kind contributions are; donated goods such as equipment, donated services such as consulting services, as well as volunteer labor.

Application Specifics

Can applicants submit address blocks lists?
Yes.

What does "last mile" mean?
The last portion of a physical broadband network that connects an eligible project to the broader network used to provide tier two broadband service.

Should applicants submit letters of support?
Letters of support are optional but can be submitted as attachments. The letters of support should detail the applicant's history in providing broadband to the surrounding areas.

Will there be a confirmation of submission once an application is submitted via online or email?
Yes, confirmations of submission will be provided via email.

Is preplanning and engineering classified as the start of construction?

Preplanning and engineering activities are not classified as starting construction and are not counted against the applicant. We anticipate that providers will have to do preliminary work to get information together to apply for the grant. For example; putting together MOUs, engineering and construction analysis, etc., will not be classified as starting construction prior to the application.

How many areas can we apply for per application?

There are no limits on how many areas per application that you can apply for. Providers can also submit multiple applications.

For construction timetable, do you want a general time length for aspects of a project, or do you want approximate dates? If specific, wouldn't that be dependent upon the award timetable?

Be as specific as possible when completing the application. For areas where specifics cannot be given, if the information is determined by the award timetable, then generalizations should be provided.

Why are we lowering the bar as far as speeds go and not requiring 100Mbps symmetrical speeds and why is latency (Lower) not addressed?

25/3 service is the floor not the ceiling. It is what the FCC has stated as their definition of high-speed internet. Scalability is important in the scoring criteria and BroadbandOhio wants to see providers go as fast as possible to get the best services out to Ohioans.

Is there any priority to 'Ohio Company's', locally owned vs. company's owned outside of Ohio for funding and grants?

There is a question in the application that asks the provider to state how many years the provider has been in operation in Ohio.

Please confirm the build time. Is it two years?

Build time is whatever the provider indicates the build time will be for the project, in the application.

If a provider uses the funds to deploy broadband to an unserved or tier one area, but has remaining capacity within the mainline fiber, can they use that remaining capacity to extend to customers outside of the grant area? Or can they deploy to outside of the grant area using their own funding?

If the provider has remaining capacity within the mainline fiber, they cannot use grant funding to deploy outside of the awarded service area. Providers may use their own money to deploy outside of the awarded service area.

Can multiple users gain access to an existing application?

No, only the user who created the application can view/edit the application. This is due to security issues. Please consider the following suggestion when creating an application: make sure the email and password being used is one that can be shared among team members so that multiple people can access and work on the application if necessary. A generic email can also be created to be shared with team members.

What is a tax ID number?

A tax ID number is also known as an Employer Identification Number (EIN) and is used to identify a business entity by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

If a challenging provider wins a challenge and the applicant takes out the successfully challenged addresses, can they add additional addresses to the application?

No, the scope of the application cannot be changed, and new addresses cannot be added, only the successfully challenged addresses can be taken out of the application. There will be a chance for the provider to revise their budget based off the challenged addresses being removed, but will not be a requirement, it will be at the discretion of the applicant.

Where can applicants find contact information if a project requires access to railroad property.

There is a document in Related Files on the Ohio Residential Broadband Expansion Grant Program webpage that offers contact information provided by the Ohio Railroad Association.

Can the notarized statements/affidavits required in the Application be done in a State other than Ohio?

Yes. The notarized statements can be notarized elsewhere than Ohio. They can be notarized wherever the statements are being made. They just need to be validly notarized (by someone authorized as a notary wherever it is taking place).

Can we provide an URL to publicly available financial filings on our website in lieu of providing a pdf of our most recent statements? The statements are too long to include in a word document/pdf.

Yes. Please include the link in the appropriate PDF attachment.

How do you qualify the maps and map sources?

Applicants are required to provide evidence as to whether an area is unserved or tier one. The Department will evaluate that evidence as applications are submitted. Numerous publicly available maps already detail these areas.

Are there maps available to indicate broadband providers in our areas?

There is not one specific map that shows where all broadband providers are operating in. Below are some maps that do provide some more information.

- https://connectednation.org/ohio/mapping-analysis/
- https://broadbandusa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ba2dcd585f5e43cba41b7c1ebf2a43d0

Where can the distressed area (2E) and opportunity zone (2F) maps be found?

The distressed county map can be found at this link https://devresearch.ohio.gov/files/research/M2023.pdf and the opportunity zones link can be found here https://opportunityzones.ohio.gov/resources. Please download and use the Ohio Opportunity Zone List. More information can be found on page 7 of the application guide.